

Message Text

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO SECRETARY

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AG, SS

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH BOUTEFLIKA

1. AM INFORMED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT BOUTEFLIKA LOOKS FORWARD VERY MUCH TO SEEING YOU TOMORROW MORNING AND FEELS THIS WILL BE IMPORTANT MEETING. HE HAS INDICATED THAT HE WILL WANT TO BRING WITH HIM ONE, POSSIBLY TWO, OF HIS PEOPLE TO INTERPRET AND TAKE NOTES. HIS CHOICE MAY BE BASHIR OULD ROUIS, CHIEF OF DIVISION OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, BUT THIS UNCERTAIN. BOUTEFLIKA HAS INDICATED TO HIS SUBORDINATES THAT IN ADDITION DISCUSSING QUESTIONS RELATING TO CONFERENCE, HE ALSO HOPES GET FROM YOU STATEMENT OF U.S. VIEWS TOWARDS NORTH AFRICAN REGION WHICH HE CAN TRANSMIT TO BOUMEDIENE. THIS MEANS, IN PARTICULAR, I PRESUME, STATEMENT OF OUR VIEWS ON SAHARA QUESTION AND HOW WE SEE BALANCE OF POWER IN AREA.

2. WITH REGARD SPANISH SAHARA, ON RETURN FROM THREE WEEKS CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON I AM IMPRESSED WITH INCREASED ALGERIAN AGITATION ON THIS ISSUE. PRESS, TV AND RADIO GIVING MUCH PUBLICITY TO CHARGES OF MOROCCAN AGGRESSION, GENOCIDE AND MISTREATMENT OF SAHARANS IN GENERAL AND THERE HAVE BEEN SERIES OF RALLIES IN SUPPORT POLISARIO. WE ARE TOLD THERE
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IS GOOD DEAL OF POPULAR SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF GOING TO WAR OVER ISSUE, BUT JUST HOW STRONG THIS SENTIMENT REALLY IS WE DO NOT KNOW. THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHENING OF ALGERIAN MILITARY POSTURE VIS-A-VIS MOROCCANS AND RISK OF BORDER CLASHES LEADING TO SERIOUS FIGHTING HAS BEEN INCREASED ACCORDINGLY. THERE REMAINS, HOWEVER, A CERTAIN AIR OF UNREALITY ABOUT ALGERIAN POSTURE AND MY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HERE ARE UNCERTAIN WHAT BOUMEDIENE HAS IN MIND AND WHAT ALGERIANS EXPECT TO EMERGE FROM PRESENT CONFRONTATION WITH MOROCCANS. THERE ALSO APPEARS TO BE LESS THAN TOTAL UNANIMITY ON SUBJECT AMONG BOUMEDIENE'S COLLEAGUES AND BOUTEFLIKA HIMSELF IS REPUTED TO BE ONE OF THE DOVES.

3. OUR VOTE FOR THE PRO-MOROCCAN RESOLUTION LAST WEEK HAS SO FAR NOT BROUGHT ABOUT A PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE IN ALGERIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS US. WHETHER EXPLANATION IS ALGERIAN DESIRE FOR CONTINUED ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH US OR BELIEF WE INCORRIGIBLE AND THEREFORE NOT WORTH GETTING MAD AT, OR WHETHER THERE IS SOME OTHER EXPLANATION REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IN ANY EVENT, IT LOOKS FROM HERE AS THOUGH ALGERIAN ATTITUDES AT PARIS MEETING ARE NOT GOING TO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY DISPLEASURE OVER OUR ROLE IN SAHARA QUESTION. ONE REASON MAY BE THAT, ACCORDING KNOWLEDGEABLE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL (ABERKANE), SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS DENIED TO ALGERIANS ALLEGATIONS THAT WE PUT PRESSURE ON SPAIN TO TAKE PRO-MOROCCAN STANCE. BOUMEDIENE HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THIS. WHATEVER REASON FOR RELATIVELY RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD US, WE GRATEFUL.

4. I HOPE YOU WILL TAKE OCCASION IMPRESS ON BOUTEFLIKA IMPORTANCE OF ALGERIA'S SENDING AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON. LACK OF COMPETENT REPRESENTATION THERE HAS BEEN REAL OBSTACLE TO SMOOTHER FUNCTIONING OUR RELATIONS AND TO PRESENTATION OF THEIR POSITIONS TO USG. AS IT IS NOW, THEY SEEM EXPECT ME TO PERFORM LATTER FUNCTION.PARKER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED TO SECRETARY.

SECRET

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